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T H E C A S E O F

Robert Balch of *Bridgwater* Gent. sitting Member of Parliament for the Borough of *Bridgwater*, in the County of *Sommerfet*, petitioned against by *John Gardner* of *London* Merchant.

THAT the said Borough of *Bridgwater* did for a long time, viz. from the latter end of the Reign of King *James* the I. elect and choose Members in Parliament by the Common Council consisting of twenty four till the year 1679.

That from that time the manner of Election of Members for the said Corporation hath been changed on a dispute between Sir *Francis Roll* and Colonel *Ralph Stawell* for the Right of Election which was heard before a Committee of Parliament 1679. Where Sir *Francis Roll*, who was chosen by the Inhabitants paying Scot and Lot, was Voted duely Elected, that ever since that method of electing hath been used, viz. by the Voices of all the Inhabitants within the said Borough, that at the time of Election stands rated and paid on the Poors Book, and no other Votes allowed, nor never till now attempted, as can easily be made out by the Election of Sir *Francis Roll*, Colonel *Stawell*, Sir *Halswell Tynt*, Sir *Francis Warr*, and others.

That on the death of Mr. *Bull* the last Member, a Writ issued out for choosing another in his Room and Place, and due notice was publickly given of the time and place of execution of the said Writ, and the Court being assembled in the *Guild-Hall*, where Mr. *Gardner* the Petitioner was present; the Mayor and Aldermen called for the Overseers of the Poor, (one of whom was for the Petitioner,) and appointed them, (one with the Original Book, and the other with a Duplicate thereof) to attend the Election at the High Cross to decide any difference that might arise on the Election.

That this Poors Book was made in the life time of Mr. *Bull*, and was no way altered nor any person added or diminished.

That accordingly the Election began, and a Poll prayed and taken by two indifferent persons agreed on.

That none but those who were and stood charged in the Poors Book, and had paid, attempted to Poll till towards the end of the Poll.

That the Petitioner (who all along kept an account of the Number of the Voices and the Equallity) finding that his number of Voices was inferiour to Mr. *Balches*, he thereupon procured some Persons who were not charged in the Poors Book to Poll for him, but were refused, on which he grounds his Petition.

That Proclamation was several times made, and the Books continued open for some considerable time after, and none qualified to Vote coming in, the Poll was shut up and adjourned back again to the *Guild-Hall*, where were two Persons of each side agreed upon to inspect the Poll, and on casting up the said Poll, the majority of Voices were found to be for the said Mr. *Balch*, who was thereupon declared and returned by the Mayor of the said Borough.

To be heard before the Committee of Elections on Friday the
2d. of December, 1692.